

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED BY THE

Rev. Mr. ROWLAND HILL,

On his laying the

First STONE of his CHAPEL,

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ST. GEORGE'S FIELDS,

JUNE 24, 1782.

*"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold
I lay in Zion for a Foundation, a Stone, a tried
Stone, a precious corner Stone, a sure Founda-
tion: he that believeth, shall not make haste."*

ISAIAH xxviii. 16.

L O N D O N:

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A SERMON, &c.

“ Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a Foundation, a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious corner Stone, a sure Foundation : he that believeth, shall not make haste.”

ISAIAH xxviii. 16.

THESE are the words of the Lord, spoken by his prophet Isaiah. “ Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation : he that believeth, shall not make haste.” Thus, my dear Brethren, are we assembled to lay the stone for a foundation of grace in our hearts. But I shall not take up

much of your time with enlarging upon the subject, so much as the extent of its glorious nature would admit. I will only make some few observations on the general intention of this Chapel, and afterwards conclude with observing, what are the particulars of its establishment. My reason for being now so brief is, that I would give an opportunity for others to give their sentiments on this subject, who may probably have it in their intention.

My dear Brethren, the stone which I have now laid, I trust and hope it will be the foundation of grace and happiness to this multitude, which are here assembled on the glorious occasion. If grace has but its foundation in thy heart, the superstructure will be obedience to your blessed Redeemer. Jesus, when he laid the
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first stone of creation, built thereon the noble and glorious structure of our redemption. The Lord saw the work was good, yea very good. Thus, my Brethren, I pray to God this Chapel may prove. For God knows my heart, I wish the building may no longer stand than it is found the tabernacle of grace and confidence in the Lord. I see, I know by the countenances, your hearts are with me in this earnest desire. It is thus the stone which we have now laid, will prove the richest gem that was ever dug from the mine. Thus ye shall all be happy. Let grace but rise in your hearts to destroy that monster-sin, and ye shall for ever rest in peace with the Lord. O, my dear Hearers, let me conjure ye to break the cords of sin, and run into the arms of thy blessed Redeemer. It is with him alone you can find protection. He will lay the foundation

dation of every spiritual comfort that can either be enjoyed here or hereafter. It is Jesus, thy Redeemer, who must invite ye from sin before your hearts will be prepared for his heavenly spirit. Then ye will have grace in your hearts which will bring forth obedience to thy Lord.

But to illustrate my sentiments, I find it frequently necessary to introduce a tale.

Some years ago I was sent for to a poor man who was dying in the arms of sin. He told me that I could be of no comfort to him. For he had enjoyed the world. All was over. He had no occasion for prayer. His heart was impenetrable to grace. I begged him to have confidence in the Lord. But he was obdurate—saying again, that his heart was as
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impenetrable to grace, as the bedstead on which he lay. Here is a picture of that miserable being, who turns not to his Lord before he is not able to turn in his bed. Let this be a warning to ye, my dear Brethren. Seek the Lord betimes. If ye defer it until the evening of your day, the night of death may involve ye in eternal misery and darkness.

Many of the world depend upon their morality and good works. But where is that morality and good works to be found which are worthy of salvation? Who is there so good or so moral as to be without sin? Where is the spotless man? Bring him before me, and I will acknowledge before ye all, he shall be saved. But I know ye will all say with me, that man is not to be found. Then why, my dear Brethren, would ye think

think or presume to depend on yourselves? No! Let your dependence be on the foundation of grace to be received from the Lord. Then, were even thy soul stained with sin as deep as the dye of the scarlet, give it to him, and his blood shall wash it as pure as the driven snow. However, let none think I am preaching, or intend to preach, against morality and good works. No! God can tell my efforts shall always be directed against immorality and bad works. It is for this purpose I have now laid this first stone as a defence against sin. It is thus, I hope to drive sin from all your hearts.

But in this my intention let none imagine that I mean to set up this Chapel to draw aside one individual from any other church. No, God forbid. My desire is to see all
churches

churches united in the Lord. It would be my greatest comfort to see them all meet in that heavenly Zion, where the Lord himself laid the first stone. In having contributed my share to this glorious work, I should lay myself down with pleasure to rest, after I had been worn out with the care of thy salvation. Then my labours would indeed be complete. O, that I may once see ye, my dear Brethren, but in possession of that heavenly Zion, where sin and misery is never found!

But now I shall proceed to say some few particulars relative to the particular intention of this Chapel; with which I mean briefly to conclude this discourse.

I have observed that I have no intention on any other church. No!

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I have a design on the Borough. I mean to make all their houses, houses of paradise. By making them all tabernacles of grace, sin will be destroyed. The destruction of sin is the creation of happiness. Misery will there be no more. Husbands shall be blessed in their wives—wives in their husbands, masters in their families—families in their masters, parents in their children—children in their parents. All shall be united in the bonds of grace, peace, and happiness. Thus it will appear that my design is not for personal emolument. Had that been my intention, should I have chosen to have fixed here my Chapel among the poorest of those inhabitants, which the Borough affords? No! I have no business with the rich. It is the poor, who are helpless, that I would relieve and succour, with that spiritual com-

comfort which is so essential to their salvation. I want not your wealth. I want your souls—that I may present them an offering to the Lord. This is why I have always been partial to field-preaching. For it is there the poor can partake of all that I would wish to administer for their relief. This is the reason that I have here chosen to fix my spiritual residence. Here those who think it not too much to pay the toll, on a Sunday, at the bridge, for profaning the sabbath, will, for the same expence, have it in their power to pay their duties and obligations to their Redeemer.

I know many persons may censure this plain language as inconsistent with that elegance which should adorn spiritual discourses. But let them censure me, my Brethren. I

confess it is not my design to raise my words so high as to pass over your heads. Your hearts is my aim. It is those I would pierce with that heavenly grace, which must constitute thy temporal and eternal happiness. For this purpose I must speak plain and intelligible. Ye must not only understand, but feel my sentiments. Otherwise I should preach, and ye would listen in vain. But I hope, through the assistance of divine grace, so to convince your minds, and affect your hearts, that ye may all be sensible of the enormity of sin, and the beauty of perfection. See but the perfection of divine grace, and I shall behold ye all running as converts to the Lord. Then ye will, indeed, be all blessed. Then will your days of despair be turned to confidence, your solicitude to peace, your distress to comfort, and every
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pain will be changed for its contrary pleasure.

Then what will be the riches and honours of the world to thine? You will be convinced with me, that riches and honours are not deserving our least care, while our only care is to turn from sin, and be perfect. I despise riches and honours. They have no charms for me. They are contemptible baubles to tempt mankind from their ultimate and only pursuit of everlasting bliss. The riches of the Christian is in proportion to the coffer of his heart being replenished with hope, and obedience in the Lord.

Now I would observe something relative to those uncharitable constructions which may be put on my conduct. It may be said, that I have in view more my personal advantage
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than your spiritual welfare. But to prevent this assertion having any support, I have caused the temporal and pecuniary management to be reposed with others. I will have no concern with it. Nor will I ever continue here longer than I am found deserving of your confidence. Beside, I have no time to attend to temporal affairs. My business is your cause with heaven. This is sufficient for my entire attention. I only wish my labour and attention may be found effective. However, nothing shall be wanting on my part. My days are yours. Be ye inclined to profit, and my labours shall be to supply ye with the means. It has been, and shall be, the great object of my wishes. I will never cease to work in your salvation. Could I bear the reflection of having seen such a multitude of sinners, and not having stretched out a hand to save

save them? Methinks I hear them
 cry, with Peter, *Lord, stretch forth
 thy hand or we perish.* Behold the
 Lord's hand is always extended to
 save his people. It is your own neg-
 lect if ye perish. But I trust, through
 the mercy of the Lord, to see ye all
 resting in peace and happiness. Then
 this fabrick will have answered its
 intention. We shall not, this day,
 have laid the stone in vain. But ye
 must all run to the Lord. Ye must
 not loiter. He who delays his repen-
 tance, hazards his salvation. Incline
 yourselves to be perfect, and ye surely
 shall find grace. Ye have a merciful
 Lord, who will always listen to the
 prayers of the penitent. Let this be
 your comfort and temptation to turn
 from your evil ways. Let every per-
 son who is now remaining in the
 arms of sin, consider the misery at-
 tendant on all its imaginary plea-
 sures.

fures. Are they not all delusive? Are they not all attended either with disappointment and remorse? Surely ye cannot have a greater temptation to turn from sin, than to contrast this with the happiness of perfection. Make the comparison, and ye must become the converts of grace. That ye may all prove thus happily restored from the bondage of sin, is the hope and confidence with which I now conclude.

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